

MYSTERY TOKENS

Part 1

by
Ron Benice

In the course of researching Alaska tokens over the past 40 years, I've succeeded in finding some historical information - dates of operation, owners' names, type of business - for most tokens catalogued in my book, *Alaska Tokens*. For the past two years, I've gone back through all my source materials as well as examining new data bases and historical articles in search of information about the tokens that lacked any information. I was able to find information about some, but many still elude me.

This series of articles will list the tokens that remain a mystery. I hope that readers with knowledge about these businesses or access to local historians or records will be able to fill in the blanks for the benefit of all of us who read *Alaskan Token Collector & Polar Numismatist*.

Anchorage:

Dixie Rooms. These tokens have the city name on them but weren't in any business directories or phone books.

Knik Exchange, Ed Rawson, Prop. These have an owner's name on them, but neither the business nor the owner were found. The closest I came was a grocer named John Rawson in Anchorage in 1923. Maybe he was Ed's son?

Palace Billiards. No city name on these. Lew Hopfenmaier acquired this one in the 1950s and was confident of the attribution.

D. Zarelli. This name appears on an unlisted cigar store token.

Barrow:

Tony's Recreation. Fernald & McDowell said this place was washed out to see in 1963. It was owned by Tony Krier, now of Nome. Dates of operation are currently not known.

Candle:

Candle Inn. Only Alaska had a town named Candle. There was a Candle Roadhouse and a Candle Hotel.



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EDITORIAL

Ron Benice has answered our call for articles this month with the first of a series. This series will deal with tokens for which he and others have not been able to find documentation.

As most collectors of tokens know, the history behind the token is often more interesting than the token itself. If it weren't for the history, who would care about a very dull, plain piece of aluminum stamped with a few letters?

So, here is our call to arms, so to speak. This is the chance for our Alaskan readers to contribute to the pursuit of history. Go to your local libraries, and help track down these tokens down. Contact "old timers" who have a wealth of knowledge to share.

Dig up some information and give these tokens a firm place in Alaska history!

What seems to pass for summer lately is here - cool and wet. We are still hoping for some warm weather so that your editor can take off the sweat shirt while playing baseball.

Kenton returned home on May 6. We are working the home contract, and he just achieved level 2, which gets him a few more privileges. He is playing baseball on my adult team. He will be attending UAF in the fall in the Culinary Arts program. It is true that we get the same kid back, just with the ability to make better choices. It is not all smooth sailing, there are few bumps but we are working through them.

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COINS FOR ROCKS & ICE



Last year, the Pobjoy Mint issued the first coins for South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands. If ever there was a place that didn't need coinage, this is it! The only place one can spend money is on South Georgia at the Museum gift shop, and maybe a military commissary. This is nothing but a way to separate a collector from his money. But since these geographic areas fit into our self imposed boundaries, we feel obligated to let you know about them. We quote from the Pobjoy Mint's web site:

"Following the success of the 2000 issue Explorers coins, from South Georgia and The South Sandwich Islands are 2001 dated coins in this series. These feature Ernest Henry Shackleton (1874-1922) who led an expedition to Antarctica, and Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) who was part of James Cook's first great voyage of discovery on board 'The Endeavour' (1768-1771)."

The coins are issued in gold, silver and cupro nickel as follows:

1/5 ounce gold, Proof \$175.00 each. Proof sterling silver \$49.00 each. Cupro nickel \$13.95 each. While the website does not address the denominations, if they follow last year's issue, the silver and cupronickel will be 2 Pounds, and the 1/5 ounce gold will be 20 Pounds.

Visit the Pobjoy Mint's website at www.pobjoy.com to place orders.

MYSTERY TOKENS, cont.

Chisana:

Bank Coffee House. No city name on the tokens. Dethridge and Fernald-McDowell attributed this in their catalogues. I found no trace. Can you?



Chitina:

A & B Drug. Kay McDowell reported this after “Rubles to Statehood” was published, but I couldn’t find any evidence of the business.

Chitina Water Supply. Some of these are stamped Jack Lawrence, others Chuck Wiener. But when were they in business?

G & G. This 12 1/2 cent token probably predates 1917, but who were the Gs and when were they in business?

L. Stenger or Stringer. Tokens have been reported with both spellings. Both names occurred in Alaska. But I never found either one in Chitina. Do both spellings exist on tokens? When were they in business?



Circle:

Cooper & Eaton, Circle City. Not in any directories. Is it from Alaska?

Eagle Saloon. Looks around 1900, but no evidence of this probably short-lived establishment was found in the references.

Readers with information on any of these tokens are requested to submit this information to the editor for inclusion in future installments of this series.

To be continued!

***** CLEAR A.F.S. ***** ELMENDORF A.F.B. *****

A new “challenge coin” will shortly be available from Clear Air Force Station. The obverse features radar apparatus, and the legend “Beginning of a new era.” The reverse has the unit designation, 13th Space Warning Sq., Sentinel of Space. The medal appears to be struck in cupronickel, and the reverse is enameled in blue and yellow. We will have a few of these available for \$9 each, plus SASE or \$3 for shipping.

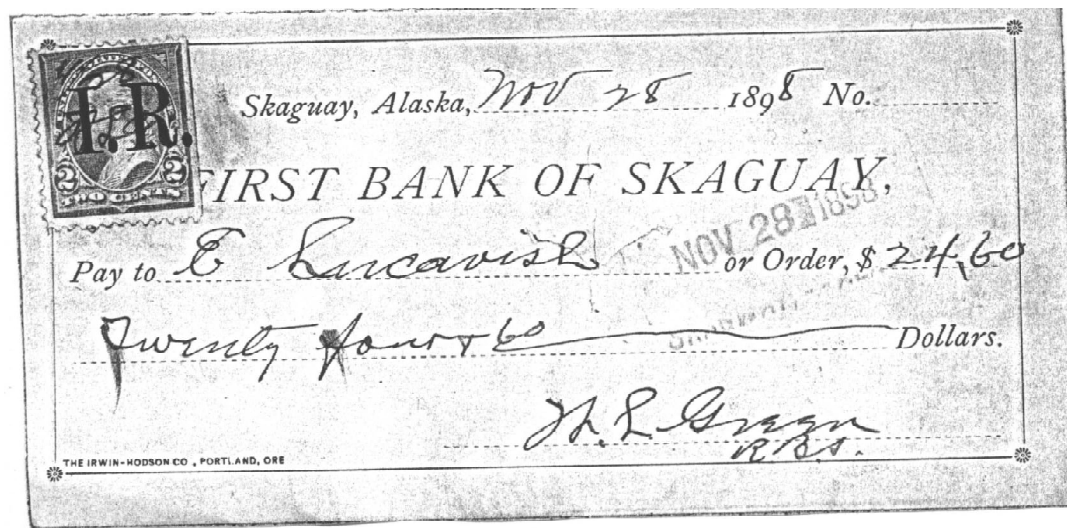


Another challenge coin, this one from Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage. The obverse has shield. The reverse has a map of Alaska with six different planes radiating out from a star representing Elmendorf A.F. B. This is surrounded by the legend “Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence in All We Do, Third Wing.” Struck in bronze, it is 40mm (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



PAPER POTPOURRI

We received a request from Charles Kemp a few months ago and we are just now putting it into the newsletter. I will quote from his letter: "Last year I got a new Alaska check that is exciting for several reasons. First, it is the earliest actual bank check that I have ever seen. It has a revenue stamp which makes it the only stamped check known. And finally, it has the original spelling for Skagway. I would like to write it up for ASCC and would be glad to share it with you but I have no information on the bank at all. I can find enough on Skagway and Soapy Smith but need some basic information on the bank. I need at least the date that it opened and closed. Anything in between would be quite welcome as well."

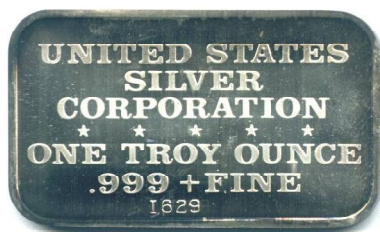


SKAGWAY: First Bank of Skaguay, check dated November 28, 1898 in the amount of \$24.60 payable to E. Incavish (?), signed by W. L. Green. 140mm by 69mm.



WHITEHORSE: Dial-a-Ticket Lottery Booth "Coffee Club" Card, Hougens Center. Black on light beige, 89mm by 56mm (submitted by Jim Robb).

THIS MONTH'S GOODIES!!



ALASKAN PIPELINE: One of the more popular motifs for Alaska medals is the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The silver bar above was one of the first issued. With a mintage of 2,000, it is remarkably scarce in Alaska. While we see the medals from the 12 piece set all the time, this is an infrequent visitor to our shop. We have purchased several of these, and they are priced at:

\$25.00



ELONGATED DIME: This piece was made in Fairbanks by Bert Samsa, circa 1987. Memory tells me that there were less than 25 made. It is a neat mushing design, and it is rolled onto a 1959 silver dime. Very scarce, these seldom become available. These are highly prized by local collectors. We have purchased three and are offering each piece at:

\$20.00

We have many of Bert's Alaska animal designs available for only **\$2** each, rolled on **cents**: wolf, ram, owl, geese, walrus, king crab, musk ox, raven, mountain goat, shrew, wolverine, otter, arctic hare, crane and porcupine. Bert's designs are deeply engraved, and not just line drawings like most elongateds. Bert sold his rolling machine and will not be making any more.



Actual size, 3.5 inches (reduced)

ALASKAN EXPRESS: And speaking of neat dog mushing items.... If you haven't been a subscriber to our newsletter for "dog years", then you may not be aware of this medal we had struck in 1985 by Medallic Arts Co. We then had four medals struck from souvenir ashtray dies, circa 1915: White Pass & Yukon Railroad, Skagway, White Horse Rapids, and the Alaskan Express. They are all uniface bronze, and only 100 of each were struck. The WP&Y sold out almost instantly, but we have specimens of all the other medals available for \$50 each or three different for \$100. Postage is extra on these (\$2 per medal in addition to our usual postage charge of \$3), as they are very heavy.

We do have one of the WP&Y medals available for \$225.

Actual size of all the medals is 3.5 inches (89mm), and 5-6mm thick (the WP&Y medal is only 4mm thick). Illustrations below greatly reduced!

